Press Release

For More Information, Call:

Courtney Johnson-Woods   For Release: March 24, 1994
Communications Manager
Arkansas Science & Technology Authority
(501) 324-9006

State Looking at its Part in the Information Superhighway

Arkansans may soon have access to public information at their fingertips, saving the state time, money, and other resources. Governor Jim Guy Tucker has called upon members of his staff and the staff of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority to conduct a feasibility study for an Arkansas information network. Such a network would provide electronic access to state, county, local, and other information useful to the Arkansas business community and citizenry. Public information could be accessed at a number of sites throughout the state using personal computers linked through the telephone network.

The goal of the network is to provide easy access to public information to even the most remote areas of the state.   Ideally, someone in (insert name of town) could access the network at a computer located in a public library, local school, or other public area. They could then obtain public information such as health inspections, regulatory permits, or legislative bills without leaving the station. "We have to be connected internally within the state first, in order to be connected globally," said Howard Harper, a staff member from the Governor's Office assigned to the project.

That's not to say that the information superhighway issue is a simple one. There are a variety of technology interests at both the state and national levels. Dr. John Ahlen, President of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority said that the feasibility study will not address all of

######

the technologies at this stage, but will initially focus on personal computers and telephone linkages. "We know that there are a number of opportunities to expand the scope of such a network to include the vast technologies available in the areas of information and communications. But like anything, success is often achieved one step at a time."

The feasibility study for the Arkansas information network is modeled after similar networks established by a number of states, and will address such questions as what information is available to include in the network; who will use the network; and how can an information network be established. Dr. Ahlen and Mr. Harper hope to obtain comments and ideas from the public that will help to shed some light on these and other questions. The public is asked to provide input by contacting Dr. Ahlen at 324-9006 or Howard Harper at 682-2345.

######